

We Band of Brothers: the Sullivans and World War II

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the oral history is such that portions of the book seem to be little more than well-written recapitulations. Moreover, judging from the footnotes (there is no bibliography), it appears that White and Maze failed to examine in any depth many rich primary sources connected to Wallace, including the editorials Wallace wrote as editor of his family's farm newspaper, *Wallaces' Farmer*, during the 1920s. This particular lacuna is crucial, for much of Wallace's social, economic, and political thinking of the 1930s and 1940s developed directly out of the literally thousands of editorial columns he wrote (or closely supervised) at *Wallaces' Farmer* between 1921 and 1933. Thus the authors' assertion that the "expansiveness" (147) that characterized Wallace's liberalism by the time he entered government in 1933 was particularly grounded in his Theosophical studies, while not necessarily wrong, rings hollow.

White and Maze have brought to the forefront factors that were clearly of central importance in Wallace's life. They have asked many of the right questions and have given them for the most part appropriate priority. As a result, readers may be inclined to give their sometimes unsubstantiated insights the benefit of the doubt. If in the end they fail to convince readers fully of their explanation of Wallace's behavior and career, their effort compels future Wallace scholars to address these issues as unflinchingly as they have.

We Band of Brothers: The Sullivans and World War II, by John R. Satterfield. Parkersburg: Mid-Prairie Books, 1995. xiv, 237 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$15.00 paper.

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN D. REGAN, ASSUMPTION HIGH SCHOOL, DAVENPORT

Prominent among the names capable of conjuring up feelings of horrible wartime tragedy and loss are the Sullivan brothers from Waterloo, Iowa. The five brothers volunteered for joint service in time of war. Their death together in the early phase of World War II awakened a soporific nation to the prospective human costs of the conflict. Chronicled in newsreels, the national press, and even movies, the deaths of these five men are familiar to many; but the specific details of their lives, the personal sufferings of their family, and the reaction of their hometown have been ignored or fictionalized until now.

John Satterfield cuts away the public relations cosmetics and mythical stories about the Sullivans and reveals the true lives of the five working-class men from Waterloo's rugged East Side. Citing noted naval historians and local acquaintances of the Sullivans, the author concisely meshes personal insights gained along the dusty streets of

Harpers Ferry and grimy factory yards of Waterloo with the account of Guadalcanal's naval battles. He quickly moves the reader from the banks of the Cedar River to the waters of the South Pacific.

The five Sullivan brothers, sons of a hard-drinking railroad worker and a sickly mother, were not the good natured, all-American altar boys portrayed in the movies. All five were high school dropouts noted for rough-and-tumble fist fights and loud motorcycles. Although Al was the youngest of the boys, he was the only brother to marry and have a child. George and Frank enlisted in the depression-era Navy. Galvanized by the attack on Pearl Harbor, George and Frank immediately decided to reenlist and easily persuaded their brothers to join them if they could all serve together. Few in the Navy saw their request as implicitly dangerous. Assigned to the USS *Juneau*, the Sullivans led undistinguished lives until a torpedo attack sank their ship in seconds. Four brothers died immediately. George survived for a few days before succumbing to delirium, exhaustion, and dehydration.

This small book indicates that the impact of the Sullivan brothers' experience is still reverberating in recent presidential decisions regarding U.S. involvement in combat, in Waterloo's renaming of their convention center, and in the dedication of a new ship, the USS *Sullivan Brothers*. Furthermore, Satterfield presents an interesting narrative of denial: the brothers' denial of inherent danger, the Navy's denial of the potential loss of ship and crew, the Sullivan family's psychological denial of the deaths, and the community's denial of the stages of grief. From the beginning, no one wanted to believe such a catastrophe could happen, and once it occurred, no one knew how to deal with it. As the author well documents, the military sanitized and mythologized the Sullivan family personalities and history, the family set aside their own grief to participate fully in the national solemnization of the deaths, and Waterloo repudiated the significance of the disaster. The Sullivan calamity is not just about five brothers; it is a tragic chapter in the annals of America and Iowa.

Slide Mountain: Or the Folly of Owning Nature, by Theodore Steinberg. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. x, 214 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$30.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY GAIL E. H. EVANS, SILVERTON, OREGON

Slide Mountain is an entertaining account of human efforts to own nature. In a series of humorously written essays, Theodore Steinberg considers how the American obsession for possessing nature—land, water, clouds, and air—has been acted out in locations as diverse and

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